

Nutrient Database-To-Go

Making healthier nutrition choices has now gotten easier. A searchable version of USDA's National Nutrient Database is now available free of charge for download to personal computers. A portable version of the database has been available since October 2002 for users of personal digital assistants (PDAs). The availability now extends to those with personal computers. After an initial download from the USDA web site, users can search for nutrient information for more than 6,000 food items in any of 22 food-group categories. The consumer can also modify the portion to suit individual needs.

Researchers worked with cooperators at HealtheTech, Inc., of Golden, Colorado, under a cooperative research and development agreement to provide this downloadable application. The PC version requires 70 megabytes of disk space and an operating system of Windows 98SE or later. The PDA version runs on the Palm operating system.

To download the nutrient database program, go to www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp. Under the red "Search the Nutrient Database" label, click on "Download Software." *Vincent de Jesus, USDA-ARS Nutrient Data Laboratory, Beltsville, Maryland; phone (301) 504-0691, e-mail vdejesus@rbhnrc.usda.gov.*

A New Chickpea for Your Salads

Spring 2003 saw the first commercial planting of Sierra, a kabuli-type chickpea—the kind served at salad bars and used in ethnic dishes. This great-tasting chickpea offers a low-fat source of fiber, protein, iron, vitamins A and C, and folic acid.

Sierra was developed from crosses made between Dwelley, an earlier release, and chickpea germplasm obtained



from Mexico and central Asia via the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas in Aleppo, Syria. Its high seed yield and resistance to *Ascochyta* blight should prove economically profitable to growers.

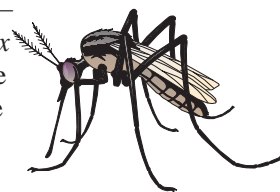
Data from field trials indicate that Sierra blooms in 65 days, grows to 21 inches high, and reaches crop maturity in 110 days. It is relatively easy to harvest by combine, since it grows upright and can be cut 6 inches off the ground. Field tests were conducted in eastern Washington, northern Idaho, North Dakota, and South Dakota. In 8 out of 10 trials, Sierra produced higher seed yields than 2 industry varieties. During 4 years of tests at 3 Palouse sites, Sierra's average yearly seed yield was 1,348 pounds per acre versus 1,274 for Dwelley. Field tests conducted in California also showed good results. ARS has filed for a Plant Variety Protection Certificate. *Frederick J. Muehlbauer, USDA-ARS Grain Legume Genetics and Physiology Research Unit, Pullman, Washington; phone (509) 335-9521, e-mail muehlbau@wsu.edu.*

Beyond DEET: New-Age Mosquito Control

West Nile virus (WNV) and St. Louis encephalitis (SLE) have become

significant health concerns. Although most people who become infected with either disease show no symptoms or only mild ones, WNV killed 284 people and made more than 4,000 clinically ill in the United States last year. And on average, 128 cases of SLE are reported annually.

One mosquito genus, *Culex*, has been shown to transmit both WNV and SLE. ARS scientists have discovered and patented a new baculovirus—a virus specific to arthropods, called CuniNPV—that kills *Culex* mosquitoes. Stable and persistent, the virus is a promising candidate



for development as a larvicide. The patent includes a method for transmitting a virus to the mosquitoes. The baculovirus is activated by mixing with magnesium. When the mixture is added into any body of water where mosquitoes breed, the larvae ingest it; the result is 85 to 95 percent kill after 2 to 3 days. There is no harm to other organisms or to the water. *James J. Becnel, USDA-ARS Center for Medical, Agricultural, and Veterinary Entomology, Gainesville, Florida; phone (352) 474-5961, e-mail jbecnel@gainesville.usda.ufl.edu.*

ARS Contributions to Remote Sensing

Nearly 40 years of Agricultural Research Service involvement in remote sensing research was noted in the June 2003 issue of *Photogrammetric Engineering & Remote Sensing*, the journal of the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing. Eight detailed articles describe ARS research on various applications of remote sensing technologies. Included are findings on remote sensing's use to rapidly map soil properties, manage crops and estimate yields, and assess water quality and ecosystem health—especially of rangelands—as well as to develop and refine sensors. While supplies last, copies may be requested at no charge from *J.L. Hatfield, USDA-ARS National Soil Tilth Laboratory, 2150 Pammel Dr., Ames, IA 50011; phone (515) 294-5723, e-mail hatfield@nssl.gov.*